

# Korean Reds Seize U.S. Vessel

## Carrier Enterprise Leading Task Fleet Ordered to Site

### Military Action

By George C. Wilson and David Hoffman  
Washington Post Staff Writers

North Korean patrol boats captured a ship of the U.S. Navy yesterday and the United States promptly ordered a sea-air task force led by the carrier Enterprise into waters off North Korea.

The Defense Department reported that four of the 83 crewmen aboard the USS Pueblo, an intelligence ship, were wounded during the capture. At least one is said to be in critical condition, even though the 906-ton vessel kept its guns silent during the encounter.

North Korea said its patrol boats returned fire from the Pueblo and that several American crew members were killed or wounded. The intelligence ship carried three 50 caliber machine guns while the Communist gunboats are armed with 40 mm. cannons.

U. S. spokesmen had nothing to say about an exchange of gunfire only that the Pueblo did not use its guns.

U.S. officials said the attack took place 16 miles off the North Korean mainland in international waters. However, North Korea countered that the Pueblo had trespassed within its 12-mile territorial limit.

The first North Korean patrol boat pulled alongside the Pueblo at 10 p.m. EST Monday and threatened it with cannon fire unless the American ship "hove to." Three other gunboats joined the first attack craft soon afterward and surrounded the intelligence ship.

An hour and 45 minutes after the first Communist craft appeared, an armed North Korean party boarded the Pueblo under cover of Mig fighter planes. The Pueblo's

skipper, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, 37, was ordered to follow the wake of a Communist patrol boat into Wonsan harbor.

The carrier Enterprise had left Sasebo, Japan, late Monday, bound for a station off the coast of North Vietnam. But immediately after the Pueblo's seizure, theater commanders turned the big ship around and ordered it to proceed northeastward toward the Sea of Japan.

Escorting the Enterprise is the nuclear frigate Truxton, several destroyers and supply ships summoned from ports in Japan. Air cover for the quickly assembled flotilla will be drawn from the Enterprise and bases in Japan and Korea as required.

As the crisis deepened, American Ambassador William J. Porter reportedly told South Korean Premier Chung Il Kwon at Seoul that the United States has taken "grave initial steps" to deal with the seizure.

The Defense Department's deputy information chief, Daniel Z. Henkin, reported last night that not until the actual boarding had begun—an hour and 45 minutes after the first patrol boat's appearance—did

the Pueblo's skipper radio for help.

In the Defense Department's view, the Pueblo's captain acted entirely on his own in electing to heave to and surrender without a fight. At no time, Henkin said, did the skipper ask permission to scuttle his ship rather than see it fall into North Korean hands.

Reliable sources reported the Pueblo lay quiet with engines off as first one, then three additional patrol boats took up positions around her. With her sophisticated electronic and acoustic monitoring devices, the intelligence ship probably heard the North Korean craft as they approached in broad daylight.



United Press International

**CMDR. L. M. BUCHER**  
... Pueblo's captain

It is not known whether the Pueblo's crew had a chance to destroy the ship's top-secret intelligence equipment before their capture. However, almost all such devices feature a "destruct" switch that triggers a self-contained charge of explosive for use during emergencies.

President Johnson was awakened between 2 and 2:30

Continued

a.m. yesterday, according to White House Press Secretary George Christian. He said that presidential aide Walt W. Rostow had done so to give him an "advisory" as to what had occurred. At that hour, the ship had gone off the air and been taken to the North Korean port of Wonsan.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk was alerted through the State Department's operations center around midnight, Washington time. Assistant Secretary William P. Bundy, whose area is all of the Far East, heard the news at 12:30 a.m.

There was no word last night as to when Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara or other top Pentagon officials were alerted or whether they had given the ship any orders.

Christian indicated that the incident had been discussed at the regular Tuesday lunch the President holds with Rusk, McNamara and Rostow. Yesterday Secretary of Defense-designate Clark Clifford, CIA Director Richard Helms and

Gen. Earle C. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also were present. What was billed as a regular meeting of the National Security Council is scheduled for 1 p.m. today. The NSC last met on Nov. 29.

Not since Feb. 4, 1862, has a U.S. naval vessel been captured by hostile forces while afloat. On that date, a Union cutter, damaged by Confederate shore fire, was captured in Galveston harbor.

But naval historians could not cite a single instance of an American ship's being hijacked on the high seas by a foreign power with which this Nation was not actively at war.

In recent years, however, U.S. intelligence ships operating off the North Korean coast have been harassed by the North Korean navy. This caused speculation yesterday that the Pueblo's skipper might not have suspected, until too late, that the patrol craft intended more than a minor provocation.

In a terse statement, the Defense Department released the following account of the Pueblo's capture:

EST (Monday) a North Korean patrol boat approached the Pueblo. Using signals, it requested the Pueblo's nationality. The Pueblo identified herself as a U.S. ship. Continuing to use flag signals, the patrol boat said: 'Heave to or I will open fire on you.' The Pueblo replied 'I am in international waters.' The patrol boat circled the Pueblo.

(It was learned yesterday that one or more of the Korean craft carried batteries of 40-mm. cannon, more than a match for the Pueblo's 50-cal. machine guns.)

The Pentagon announcement continued:

"Approximately one hour later, three additional patrol craft appeared. One of them ordered: 'Follow in my wake; I have a pilot aboard.' The four ships closed in on the Pueblo, taking different positions on her bow, beam and quarter. Two Mig aircraft were also sighted by the Pueblo circling off the starboard bow.

"One of the patrol craft began backing toward the bow of the Pueblo with fenders rigged. An armed boarding party was standing on the bow.

"The Pueblo radioed at 11:45 p.m. that she was being boarded by North Koreans.

"At 12:10 a.m. EST today (Tuesday), the Pueblo reported that she had been requested to follow the North Korean ships into Wonsan and that she had not used any weapons.

"The final message from the Pueblo was sent at 12:32 a.m. It reported that it had come to 'all stop' and that it was 'going off the air.'"

The North Korean radio promptly charged the Pueblo was a "spy ship" engaged in "hostile activities" inside its territorial waters. Radio Pyongyang also linked the Pueblo's presence off Wonsan to recent raids on the South Korean capital of Seoul by unidentified insurgents.

North Korea alleged that as a result of the raids, which it said was carried out by South Korean guerrillas, U.S. and South Korean authorities had gone into a "fit of frenzy." The Americans and South Koreans, Radio Pyongyang said, had fired "thousands of rounds" of small arms and artillery across the demilitarized zone after the attempt to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung Hee. Harming a communications breakdown, U.S. 5th Air Force headquarters near Tokyo had

at least one hour and 45 minutes notice that the Pueblo was in serious trouble. Even through its captain did not request immediate aid, that much time elapsed between the appearance of the first North Korean patrol boat and the boarding of the Pueblo.

Yet U.S. fighters failed to rescue the beleaguered ship, raising the question, why?

The U.S. 5th Air Force, whose jurisdiction includes Korea, customarily rotates fighter squadrons from Japan into and out of South Korea on temporary tours of duty. More often than not, these squadrons are based at K-55, an air base near the village of Osan-ni, about 30 nautical miles south of Seoul.

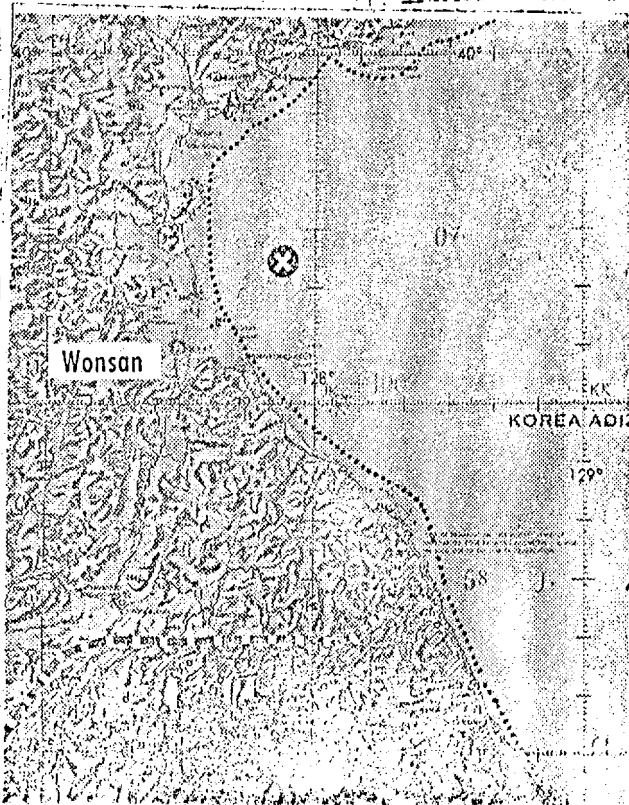
As fighters fly, K-55 is just 17 minutes from the spot where the Pueblo encountered trouble. Other major air bases—K-8 at Kunsan and K-2 at Taegu—are less than half an hour by jet from the same spot.

K-55, moreover, can communicate with the powerful U.S. radar station perched atop a bluff on Paengnyong-do Island in the Yellow Sea. "P-Y-Do," the site's nickname, sits a mile south of the 38th parallel off the west coast of North Korea.

It is understood this Ground Control Intercept radar is powerful enough to reach across North Korea and pick up hostile aircraft in the area being patrolled by the Pueblo. Yet there is no evidence U.S. fighters were scrambled to ward off the North Korean patrol boats and their Mig-17 fighter cover.

The capture of the Pueblo was reminiscent of the 1964 Tonkin Gulf incident in which North Vietnamese torpedo boats reportedly attacked two U.S. destroyers. President Johnson retaliated by ordering U.S. fighter-bombers to destroy the North Vietnamese bases from which such craft operated.

This raid, the first on North Vietnam, preceded by six months the beginning of sustained bombing attacks.



This detailed U.S. Air Force map shows the spot where U.S. officials say the USS Pueblo was captured in international waters by North Korean patrol boats. The heavy dotted line across Korea is the 1953 cease-fire line between North and South Korea.

WASHINGTON POST  
AND TIMES HERALD

JAN 24 1968